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ABSTRACT

Data collected from 136 7th and 8th graders were analyzed to assess the relationship between reciprocity (mutual and non-mutual selection of friends), friendship similarity (in the areas of sex, race, physical attractiveness, interpersonal attitudes, intelligence, and friendship satisfaction and commitment) and friendship proximity both in and out of school. On the basis of these data, subjects were then classified into dyads based on three variables: reciprocity, sex, and race. Friendships were classified as either reciprocated or non-reciprocated. Further analysis yielded the following major findings: Reciprocated adolescents were perceived as more attractive, had higher social status, and were more committed to their best friend than non-reciprocated adolescents. More black than white students were in the non-reciprocated group. White students had more in-school contact and black students more out-of-school contact with their friends. Reciprocal dyads were more similar than non-reciprocal dyads on one status variable, and in friendship satisfaction and commitment. Female dyads were more similar than male dyads in intelligence and personality. The reciprocal dyads consisted of more same-sex and female friends. Future research needs to focus on sex and racial differences in friendship selection and maintenance during early adolescence. (Author/RDN)

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Reciprocity and Junior High School Friendships

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Abstract

The relationship of reciprocity, sex and race to similarity and proximity in adolescent friendships was studied. Intelligence, interpersonal attitudes, personality, physical attractiveness, and proximity were measured for 136 junior high school students. Subjects were classified as either having reciprocated or non-reciprocated friendships. Reciprocated adolescents were perceived as more attractive, had higher social status, and were more committed to their best friend than non-reciprocated adolescents. More black than white students were in the non-reciprocated group. White students had more in school contact and black students more out of school contact with their friends. Dyads were classified based on mutuality and gender. Reciprocal dyads were more similar than non-reciprocal dyads on one status variable. Non-reciprocal dyads were more similar than reciprocal dyads in friendship satisfaction and commitment. Female dyads were more similar than male dyads in intelligence and personality. The reciprocal dyads consisted of more same-sex and female friends.

Reciprocity and Junior High School Friendships

Rubin (1980) identified three functions of children's friendships: to provide opportunities for the learning of social skills, to facilitate the social comparison and self process, and to foster a sense of group belonging. Coates (1984) listed interpersonal competence and social responsibility as two of the developmental outcomes of peer relations. Adequate friendships are needed for normal social development, especially during the pre- and early adolescent period. Fine (1980) noted that during this period peer relationships may take priority over relations with siblings and parents.

Reciprocity, similarity and proximity are factors that influence both the selection of friends and the stability of friendships. Reciprocal friendships are those in which dyad members express mutual liking for each other. McGuire and Weisz (1982) defined friendship as an "ongoing reciprocal liking and behavioral involvement between two individuals" (p. 1479). Thus, when the word friendship is used one assumes that reciprocal liking exists. However, unilateral relationships or non-reciprocal friendships do occur when there are one-sided, non-mutual friendship selections.

Friendship reciprocity is related to both friendship similarity and friendship proximity. Adolescents are similar to

their friends in attitudes, interests, educational aspirations, and achievements (Ball, 1981; Coben, 1977; Epstein, 1983; Kandel, 1978; Karweit & Hansell, 1983). Like children of all ages they select for friends those who are similar in age, gender, and race (Kandel, 1978; Schofield, 1981; Tuma & Hallinan, 1979). Late adolescent friends have similar personalities (Izard, 1960; Duck & Craig, 1978) and were found to be more similar in locus of control than acquaintances (Henderson & Furnham, 1982).

Data on the friendship similarity of early adolescents is scarce. Kurdek & Krile (1982) found that mutual friends were more similar than non-mutual friends in social competence and interpersonal understanding which supports the similarity-attraction theory. However, Berndt (1982) believed that early adolescents may choose friends with "complementary interests and traits, friends whom they can idealize or friends who engage in behaviors that fascinate them but that they are afraid to perform themselves" (p. 1453). Additional research is needed to determine the role of similarity in early adolescence.

Children and adolescents tend to select close friends from peers who are in their classrooms, live in the same neighborhood, or those who are involved in similar extracurricular activities. Epstein (1983) noted that the number and proximity of children within a neighborhood and the availability of recreational facilities for children will affect the dynamics of friendships

outside of school. She further indicated that the organization of classrooms and schools influence the nature and degree of student contact and thus friendship selection. Proximity is a necessary ingredient for peer assessment and ultimately friendship selection. Few studies have investigated the relationship between reciprocity and proximity in early adolescence or examined sex differences in friendship proximity.

Adolescent girls have smaller, more exclusive friendships than adolescent boys (see Berndt, 1982). Bee and Mitchell (1984) noted that girls reported being more attached than boys to their same-sex friends. The relationships of boys were dominated by sharing activities instead of disclosing feelings. Karweit (cited in Karweit & Hansell, 1983) found boys made more out-of-school friends than did females and Karweit and Hansell proposed that the "internal structure of friendship groups, specifically the extent of reciprocity, differs for adolescent males and females" (p. 122). More data is needed on sex differences in adolescent friendships.

The primary purpose of the present study was to investigate those factors that are related to reciprocity in the friendships of early adolescents. The study assessed the relationship between friendship reciprocity (mutual and non-mutual selection); friendship similarity in the areas of sex, race, physical attractiveness, personality, interpersonal attitudes,

intelligence, friendship satisfaction, and friendship commitment; and friendship proximity both in and out of school. In addition, the study investigated sex differences in early adolescent friendships. The following hypotheses were tested: 1) Adolescents with reciprocal friendships would differ from those adolescents without reciprocal relationships in personality, intelligence, attitudes, and level of friendship satisfaction and friendship commitment; 2) Reciprocated adolescents would have a higher level of contact with their friends than non-reciprocated adolescents; 3) Reciprocal dyads would be more similar than non-reciprocal dyads in personality, physical attractiveness, attitudes, activities, sex, friendship satisfaction, and friendship commitment; 4) Male and female friendships would differ in reciprocity, and similarity.

Method

Measures

Six measures were administered to obtain data on the adolescents' friendships. A sociometric questionnaire was devised to assess friendship choice. Subjects were asked to identify and rank their three best friends within their grade level. This data was then used to establish reciprocal (two students select each other as friend) and non-reciprocal dyads (a friendship selection is nonmutual). The second part of this questionnaire measured friendship proximity. For each of the three best friends listed

each subject was asked a series of questions to determine whether each friend lived within walking distance, attended the same church, rode the same school bus; and were also asked how many classes and clubs they were in with each friend, and how often each week they saw each friend outside of school.

The Satisfaction and Commitment Scale (Solano & Ayers, 1984) was administered to assess the degree of friendship satisfaction and commitment experienced in regard to the student's very best friend. The scale consists of 20 statements that express an attitude toward the best friend or the friendship itself. Half of the items measure friendship commitment (e.g., My best friend and I will probably be friends for a long time) and the remainder friendship satisfaction (e.g., I am happy being friends with my best friend). Items are answered by using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree). A satisfaction and a commitment score are possible with each ranging from 0 to 100.

The students' general attitudes toward people were assessed by the Kiddie Mach which is a form of the original Machiavellianism Scale devised especially for children and measures the extent to which the subject feels that other people can be manipulated. Verbal intelligence was measured by the Word Understanding Test (WUT). The WUT measures verbal comprehension and vocabulary for junior and high school students and consists of 32 vocabulary items with a multiple choice response format.

Personality was measured by the High School Personality Questionnaire (HSPQ) which measures 14 primary personality dimensions such as stability, tension, warmth and 10 other factors (e.g., anxiety, extraversion, creativity, leadership).

Physical attractiveness was measured by using the nomination technique. Each student was asked to nominate three people from their grade level for most handsome boy and prettiest girl. In addition, they were asked to nominate classmates for the following categories: neatest, wears the nicest clothes and most likely to succeed. Scores for the physical attractiveness and nomination data were derived for each child by calculating the percentage of possible times he/she could be chosen. Lastly, students were given a questionnaire to assess background information on each of the following: sex, race, and the number of siblings.

Procedure

All data were collected in two 60-minute group sessions held within the regular classroom with testing performed by trained examiners. The HSPQ and Word Understanding Tests were given in one session and the Background Information Sheet, Kiddie Mach, Sociometric Questionnaire, Satisfaction and Commitment Scale, and Nomination Ballot were administered in a second session, all during the winter of 1984.

Results

Subjects were classified as reciprocal if their friendship choices were mutual and non-reciprocal if those peers that they selected as best friends did not reciprocate their choice. There were 99 children in the reciprocal group and 30 in the non-reciprocal group.

A series of 2 (reciprocity: reciprocated, non-reciprocated) x 2 (sex: male, female) x 2 (race: white, black) ANOVAs were calculated for each dependent variable. The reciprocated group received higher scores than the non-reciprocated group on the following variables: most likely to succeed, $F(1, 114) = 5.01$, $p < .03$; neatness, $F(1, 114) = 4.60$, $p < .03$; nicest clothes, $F(1, 114) = 7.28$, $p < .008$; attractiveness, $F(1, 114) = 6.65$, $p < .01$; and friendship commitment, $F(1, 96) = 14.90$, $p < .001$.

Insert Table 1 about here

The females had higher scores than the males on neatness, $F(1, 114) = 5.49$, $p < .02$; mental alertness, $F(1, 114) = 17.48$, $p < .001$; delinquency, $F(1, 114) = 4.04$, $p < .05$; assertiveness, $F(1, 114) = 13.73$, $p < .001$; and friendship commitment, $F(1, 96) = 3.90$, $p < .05$. However, males had higher scores than females on extraversion, $F(1,114) = 4.82$, $p < .03$; neuroticism, $F(1, 114) = 4.03$, $p < .05$; and sensitivity, $F(1, 114) = 9.86$, $p < .002$.

The white students had higher scores than the black students on intelligence, $F(1, 114) = 33.91$, $p < .001$; school achievement, $F(1, 114) = 11.04$, $p < .001$; HSPQ intelligence, $F(1, 114) = 5.78$, $p < .02$; and seriousness, $F(1, 114) = 7.54$, $p < .01$; and lower scores than black students on neuroticism, $F(1, 114) = 6.52$, $p < .01$; delinquency proneness, $F(1, 114) = 6.24$, $p < .01$; and sensitivity, $F(1, 114) = 7.07$, $p < .009$.

A reciprocity by race interaction occurred for intelligence, $F(1, 115) = 7.56$, $p < .007$; and self sentiment, $F(1, 114) = 6.74$, $p < .01$. The non-reciprocated white students had the highest and the non-reciprocated black students the lowest intelligence scores. The non-reciprocated blacks had the highest self sentiment scores whereas the lowest scores were obtained by the non-reciprocated white subjects. In addition, there were sex by race interactions on the following variables: independence, $F(1, 114) = 4.22$, $p < .04$; zestfulness, $F(1, 114) = 8.33$, $p < .005$; and friendship satisfaction, $F(1, 96) = 6.64$, $p < .01$. There was no difference between the white males and white females on independence and zestfulness but the black males had the highest and the black females the lowest independence and zestfulness scores. In addition, white males expressed more friendship satisfaction than the white females or black students.

A step-wise discriminant analysis was calculated with reciprocity as the criterion variable and the dependent measures

as the discriminators. The following seven variables correctly classified 84% of the students (82%, reciprocal; 94%, non-reciprocal), and were significant discriminators, $\underline{X}^2(7) = 36.06$, $\underline{p} < .001$, Wilks' Lambda of .68: friendship commitment, assertiveness, friendship satisfaction, self sentiment, most likely to succeed, nicest clothes, and intelligence.

Chi-square analyses to assess the relationship between reciprocity, sex, race, and proximity were calculated. More black (40%) than white students (14%) were in the non-reciprocated group, $\underline{X}^2(1) = 8.33$, $\underline{p} < .003$. There was a trend toward more females (84%) being classified as reciprocated than males (69%), $\underline{X}^2(1) = 3.53$, $\underline{p} < .06$. A larger number of the non-reciprocated than reciprocated students lived within walking distance of their best friend, $\underline{X}^2(1) = 13.49$, $\underline{p} < .001$, and second best friend, $\underline{X}^2(1) = 8.63$, $\underline{p} < .03$.

Separate 2 (reciprocity: reciprocated, non-reciprocated) x 2 (sex: male, female) x 2 (race: white, black) ANOVAs were calculated on the number of classes and club memberships each student shared with their three best friends, and the number of days each week they saw each of these three friends outside of school. The reciprocated students shared more classes with their best friend, $\underline{F}(1, 115) = 4.11$, $\underline{p} < .05$; second best friend, $\underline{F}(1, 115) = 4.01$, $\underline{p} < .05$; and third best friend, $\underline{F}(1, 115) = 10.50$, $\underline{p} < .002$, than the non-reciprocated students. The males shared more

classes than females with their second best friend, $F(1, 115) = 6.43$, $p < .01$; and third best friend, $F(1, 115) = 7.11$, $P < .009$. In addition, white students shared more classes than black students with their best friend, $F(1, 115) = 4.68$, $p < .03$; and second best friend, $F(1, 115) = 3.67$, $p < .05$.

Black students spent more time than white students each week with their second best friend, $F(1, 115) = 11.55$, $p < .001$. Black males spent significantly more time with their best friend, $F(1, 115) = 5.31$, $p < .01$, and third best friend, $F(1, 115) = 22.97$, $p < .001$, than black females or white students.

Subjects were categorized into dyads based on their sociometric information. The reciprocal group was composed of those dyads who selected each other as friends. The non-reciprocal group consisted of those dyads with unilateral or unreciprocated friendship choices. There were 97 reciprocal and 57 non-reciprocal dyads. In addition, dyads were classified by sex as either same-sex male, same-sex female or cross-sex. There were 8 cross-sex, 106 same-sex male and 99 same-sex female dyads.

A dyad difference score was calculated for each dependent variable by subtracting the scores of the dyad members. A series of 2 (dyadtype: reciprocal, non-reciprocal) x 2 (dyad sex: male, female) ANOVAs were calculated using the dyad difference scores for each dependent variable. The non-reciprocal dyads were more

similar than the reciprocal dyads on friendship commitment, $F(1, 157) = 18.44$, $p < .001$; and friendship satisfaction, $F(1, 157) = 5.55$, $p < .02$, while the reciprocal dyads were more similar than the non-reciprocal dyads on their neatness nominations, $F(1, 201) = 4.78$, $p < .03$.

Insert Table 2 about here

The male dyads were more similar than the female dyads on neatness, $F(1, 201) = 20.91$, $p < .001$; nicest clothes, $F(1, 201) = 21.19$, $p < .001$; friendship satisfaction, $F(1, 157) = 5.17$, $p < .02$; friendship commitment, $F(1, 157) = 5.71$, $p < .02$. However, the female dyads were more similar than the male dyads on the following variables: intelligence, $F(1, 201) = 9.35$, $p < .003$; independence, $F(1, 201) = 6.67$, $p < .01$; neuroticism, $F(1, 201) = 12.45$, $p < .001$; delinquency, $F(1, 201) = 4.69$, $p < .03$; assertiveness, $F(1, 201) = 7.55$, $p < .04$; seriousness, $F(1, 201) = 7.98$, $p < .005$; and guilt proneness, $F(1, 141) = 4.58$, $p < .03$. There was a significant reciprocity by sex of dyad interaction on the neatness variable, $F(1, 201) = 8.49$, $p < .004$. The non-reciprocal male dyads were most similar while the non-reciprocal female dyads were the least similar on their neatness nominations.

There was a dyad sex by dyad reciprocity interaction on the zestfulness, $F(1, 141) = 5.43$, $p < .02$, and the tension personality variables, $F(1, 141) = 4.71$, $p < .03$. Male reciprocal dyads and female non-reciprocal dyads were more similar in zestfulness than male non-reciprocal and female reciprocal dyads. In addition, non-reciprocal female dyads were the most similar and reciprocal female dyads least similar on the tension variable.

Chi-square analyses to assess the relationship between reciprocity and sex of dyad were calculated. There were more same-sex than cross-sex friendships in the reciprocal group, $\chi^2(2) = 7.64$, $p < .02$, however, the majority of friendships were same-sex. In addition, a larger proportion of the male than female dyads were non-reciprocal.

Discussion

Adolescents who had mutual friendships were no different in personality than those without mutual friendships, contradicting part of the first hypothesis. However, those with reciprocal relationships were viewed as more attractive and more successful by their classmates than those early adolescents without mutual friends. In addition, those who were in mutual relationships reported a greater degree of commitment to their best friend than those adolescents who were in one-sided best friend relationships. Based on data from the discriminant analysis, adolescents with best friends could be distinguished from those

with no best friends because they had higher scores on intelligence, friendship satisfaction, friendship commitment, and the classroom status variables.

Clark and Drewry (in press) found that third and sixth graders who were without reciprocated friendship choices differed in overall popularity and their classroom nominations for most likely to succeed, most fun to be with, neatest, and nicest clothes. Children who were not chosen by anyone as a best friend were low status children in their classes. They were rarely chosen by their classmates for any of the popularity or status variables. Clark and Drewry concluded that the non-reciprocated children were selecting as friends those of a higher status to possibly enhance their own status and likability within their class. A similar pattern was found for the early adolescents in the present study. Theories of social relationships have postulated that mutual relationships involve those who are on a similar status level while non-mutual or asymmetric relations most often involve a lower status person who chooses another from a higher status (Davis & Leinhardt, 1972; Karweit & Hansell, 1983). These findings with pre- and early adolescents support the adult theories of social relationships.

Black students were more likely than white students to have non-reciprocated friendship choices. These data suggest that in desegregated classes black children may have a greater problem

than white children finding mutual friendships. Past research has shown that black children tend to make more cross-race friendship choices than white students (Asher, Oden, & Gottman, 1977; Shaw, 1973) and these cross-race choices are most often non-reciprocal (Clark & Drewry, in press). These results imply that desegregated classrooms may provide a less adequate social environment for black than white children and adolescents.

In the present sample there was a tendency for a greater number of males than females to be classified as non-reciprocated. Karweit and Hansell (1983) have proposed that boy friendship networks are larger and looser than those of girls. In addition, boys are more concerned than girls about status in selecting friends, thus boys would typically make more unreciprocated choices. Our data support the notions of Karweit and Hansell.

Early adolescents who had reciprocated relationships did appear to have more contact with their selected friends than non-reciprocated adolescents, supporting the second hypothesis. However, their greater contact was limited to the school setting. Reciprocated adolescents shared more classes with their best friends but they did not live closer to these friends than non-reciprocated adolescents. It was interesting to note that white students shared more classes with their friends than black students who in contrast spent more time than white adolescents

outside of school interacting with their best friends, especially black males. Past researchers have validated that the structure of a school or classroom influence the nature of friendship formation (Epstein, 1983; Hallinan, 1979). The present findings support these beliefs and imply that school structure may increase contact for white friends and inhibit contact for black friends who in turn seek contact outside of school with their best friends.

Contrary to the third hypothesis, the reciprocal dyads were not more similar than the non-reciprocal dyads in personality, intelligence and attitudes. It may be that early adolescents are a homogeneous group and even non-reciprocal dyads share many common qualities. It is also possible that early adolescents select friends with complementary personalities as suggested by Berndt (1982). However, as one might expect the reciprocal friends were more similar than the non-reciprocal friends in their evaluations of the level of satisfaction with and commitment to their present best friend.

The greatest difference in friends occured when comparing the similarity between male friends with that of female friends, supporting part of the fourth hypothesis. The female dyads appeared to be more similar in intelligence and personality than the male dyads. It has been well established that the intimacy level of female friends exceeds that of male friendships (Berndt, 1982; Crockett, Losoff, & Petersen, 1984). Consequently,

personality similarity of friends may be necessary before intimacy and self-disclosure can occur. In contrast, the male dyads were more similar on the status variables and their level of satisfaction and commitment to their best friends although there were no sex differences in individual levels of friendship satisfaction and commitment. These findings support Karweit and Hansell's (1983) notion that status is more important in male than female relationships. They also suggested that the structure of junior high school created stress for adolescent females and made it more difficult for them to develop the desired level of intimacy in their relationships. Thus female friends would be more different than male friends in their level of satisfaction and commitment to their best friend. Contrary to the fourth hypothesis, male and female dyads did not differ significantly on their degree of reciprocity; however, there was a trend toward a greater number of male than female dyads classified as non-reciprocal.

Similarity, reciprocity and proximity are all important elements in understanding the nature of friendship selection and friendship structure during early adolescence. These variables may function differently in adolescent friendships than in adult social relationships. The degree to which these variables influence adolescent friendships will vary as a function of the sex of the dyad. The present data suggest that status and the

structure of schools may play important roles in determining the nature of friendship formation in junior high school. Future research needs to focus on the issue of sex and race differences in friendship selection and maintenance during early adolescence.

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Table 1

Individual Means by Reciprocity, Sex, and Race

	Reciprocity		Sex		Race	
	Reciprocated	Non-reciprocated	Male	Female	White	Black
Likely to						
Succeed	7.60	1.32*	5.07	7.26	6.52	5.45
Neatness	7.39	1.96*	3.89	8.39*	6.95	4.50
Nicest Clothes	6.51	.96**	3.56	6.90	5.80	4.10
Attractiveness	12.84	1.71**	9.57	11.03	12.92	4.90
Intelligence	5.26	4.18	4.84	5.19	5.78	3.42
Extraversion	56.43	54.04	58.93	52.97*	56.95	53.67
Mental						
Alertness	61.32	60.33	53.85	68.11***	62.89	57.28
School						
Achievement	46.86	43.22	45.70	46.40	49.76	38.18***
Neuroticism	51.93	54.04	55.57	49.32*	49.72	58.08**
Delinquency	57.44	62.63	56.18	60.92*	55.94	64.23**
HSPQ						
Intelligence	5.40	4.19	4.92	5.34	5.72	3.87*
Assertiveness	6.11	6.44	5.57	6.77***	6.19	6.15
Seriousness	6.43	5.89	6.25	6.37	6.67	5.54**
Sensitivity	5.44	5.70	6.05	4.97**	5.18	6.18**
Friendship						
Commitment	41.01	34.24***	38.38	41.36*	40.77	37.81
n	95	27	60	62	83	39

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Table 2

Dyad Difference Score Means by Reciprocity and Sex

Dependent	Dyad Reciprocity		Dyad Sex	
Variables	Reciprocal	Non-reciprocal	Male	Female
Neatness	5.69	7.43*	4.31	9.19***
Nicest Clothes	5.37	5.53	3.42	7.65***
Intelligence	1.16	1.40	1.60	.96**
Independence	23.57	21.99	25.75	19.42**
Neuroticism	18.01	18.42	21.57	14.60***
Delinquency	18.26	18.08	20.15	16.00*
Assertiveness	2.30	2.05	2.44	1.86**
Seriousness	2.21	1.99	2.41	1.70**
Friendship Satisfaction	40.57	38.18*	38.18	40.50*
Friendship Commitment	41.58	37.80***	38.41	40.76*
n	87	103	99	91

Note. The smaller the mean score the greater the similarity of dyad members.

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$